

Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah

(The Imminent Event)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 96 verses and 3 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 56

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١﴾ لَيْسَ لِمَنْ لَوْقَعَتْهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ﴿٢﴾ خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ ﴿٣﴾ إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًا ﴿٤﴾ وَيُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًا ﴿٥﴾ فَكَانَتْ
 هَبَاءً مُنْبَثًا ﴿٦﴾ وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً ﴿٧﴾ فَأَصْحَبُ الْمِئْمَنَةِ لَا مَا
 أَصْحَبُ الْمِئْمَنَةِ ﴿٨﴾ وَأَصْحَبُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ لَا مَا أَصْحَبُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ﴿٩﴾
 وَالسَّيْقُونِ السَّيْقُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿١١﴾ فِي جَنَّتِ
 النَّعِيمِ ﴿١٢﴾ ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ عَلَى
 سُرُرٍ مَوْضُونَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مُتَكِبِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ
 وَلَدَانِ مُخَلَّدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَاكُوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقٍ وَلَا وَكَاسٍ مِّنْ مَّعِينٍ ﴿١٨﴾
 لَا يَصْدَعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَحُورٌ عِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ
 الْمَكْنُونِ ﴿٢٣﴾ جَزَاءً لِّمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا
 لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا ﴿٢٥﴾ إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَأَصْحَبُ الْمِئْمَنِ لَا

مَا أَصْحَبَ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٢٧﴾ فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ ﴿٢٩﴾
 وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ ﴿٣٢﴾
 لَّامْقُطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَفَرْشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّا
 أَنشَأْنَهُنَّ إِنِشَاءً ﴿٣٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنَهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا ﴿٣٦﴾ عُرُبًا أَتْرَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾
 لِأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٣٨﴾ ثَلَاثَةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾
 وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ ؕ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ ﴿٤١﴾ فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ ﴿٤٢﴾
 وَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَّا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ إِنَّهُمْ
 كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ
 الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ ؕ إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا إِنَّا
 لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ أَوْ أَبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ
 لَمَجْمُوعُونَ ؕ إِلَىٰ مِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٥٠﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَهِيََا
 الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَدِّبُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ لَا تَكْلُونُ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِّنْ زُقُومٍ ﴿٥٢﴾
 فَمَا لِفُؤُنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونُ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَشَرِبُوا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ ﴿٥٤﴾
 فَشَرِبُوا شُرْبَ الْهَيْمِ ﴿٥٥﴾ هَذَا نُزْلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿٥٦﴾

When the Imminent Event (of Doom) will occur, [1] there will be no one to deny its occurrence. [2] It will be abasing (some), exalting (others) [3] when the earth will be jolted with a quake, [4] and the mountains will be crumbled with a thorough crumbling, [5] until they will become dust, scattered in the air, [6] and you will be (divided into) three categories. [7] As for the People of the Right, how (lucky) are the people of the Right! [8] And the People of the Left? How (wretched) are the People of the Left! [9] And the Foremost are the foremost. [10] Those are the ones blessed with nearness (to Allah) [11] in gardens of bliss, [12] many from the earlier generations, [13] and of a small number from the later ones. [14] (They will be sitting) on thrones woven

with gold, [15] reclining on them, facing each other. [16] They will be served in rounds by Immortal boys [17] with bowls and jugs and a goblet of pure wine, [18] from which they will neither suffer headache, nor will they be intoxicated, [19] and with fruits of their choice, [20] and the meat of birds that they desire. [21] And (for them there will be) houris, having lovely big eyes, [22] all (neat and clean) like a hidden pearl, [23] as a reward for what they used to do. [24] They will hear neither an absurd talk therein, nor something leading to sin, [25] but the words of *salām, salām* (as greetings). [26] As for the People of the Right, how (lucky) are the People of the Right! [27] (They will be) amid lote-trees with no thorns, [28] and the trees of *ṭalh*, (banana, or a fragrant tree) having layers one upon the other, [29] and a shade, spread all over, [30] and water, poured forth, [31] and a lot of fruits, [32] neither interrupted (in any season), nor prohibited, [33] and mattresses of high quality. [34] Surely We have created those (females) a fresh creation, [35] and have made them virgins, [36] amorous to their husbands, matching them in age, [37] for the People of the Right, [38] (comprising) many from the earlier generations, [39] and many from the later ones. [40] As for the People of the Left, How (wretched) are the People of the Left! [41] (They will be) in burning wind and boiling water, [42] and in a shade of black smoke, [43] neither cool nor graceful. [44] They were before that indulged in luxuries, [45] and used to persist in major sins, [46] and used to say, "Is it that when we die and become dust-is it that we will be raised again, [47] and our ancient fathers as well?" [48] Say, "All the earlier and the later ones [49] will be gathered together for a fixed time of a specified Day. [50] Then O you, the erring, the denying people, [51] you will have to eat from the tree of *Zaqqūm*, [52] and to fill with it the bellies, [53] then you will have to drink boiling water on top of it, [54] and to drink like camels suffering from the disease of over-thirst. [55] This will be their entertainment on the Day of Requit. [56]

Special Characteristic of Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah: Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd's Didactic Story on his Deathbed

Ibn Kathīr cites a story on the authority of Ibn 'Asakir from Abū Zabyah that when Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ was lying on his deathbed, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ paid him a visit and the following

conversation ensued.

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: "مَا تَشْتَكِي؟" "What are you suffering from?"

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه: "ذُنُوبِي" "from my sins."

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: "مَا تَشْتَهِي؟" "Do you desire anything?"

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه: "رَحْمَةُ رَبِّي" "Yes, Allah's mercy."

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: "أَلَا أَمُرُّكَ بِطَبِيبٍ؟" "Shall I call a doctor for you?"

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه: "الطَّبِيبُ أَمْرَضَنِي" "It is the doctor who has given me the ailment."

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: "أَلَا أَمُرُّكَ بِعَطَاءٍ؟" "May I send you an allowance from the public treasury?"

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه: "لَا حَاجَةَ لِي فِيهِ" I have no need for it."

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: "يَكُونُ لِبَنَاتِكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ" "Accept it, [please]. You are leaving daughters behind you. It will help them."

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه: "إِنِّي أَتَخَشَّى عَلَى بَنَاتِي الْفَقْرَ إِنِّي أَمَرْتُ بَنَاتِي يَقْرَأْنَ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ سُورَةَ الْوَاقِعَةِ. إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: مَنْ قَرَأَ سُورَةَ الْوَاقِعَةِ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ لَمْ تُصِبْهُ فَاقَةٌ أَبَدًا. (ابن كثير ٣٠٢:٤) "You are worried about my daughters that they must not suffer from poverty. I have no such worry, because I have instructed them to recite Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah every night. I have heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah every night will never suffer from poverty'."

Ibn Kathīr, after citing this story from Ibn ‘Asākīr, has supported it with other chains of transmitters and other sources.

Horrors of the Day of Resurrection

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (When the Imminent Event (of Doom) will occur...56:1). Ibn Kathīr says Al-wāqī'ah is one of the names of the Day of Resurrection, because there is no room for doubt in its occurrence. It is real and will surely come to pass.

لَيْسَ لَوْفَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ (...there will be no one to deny its occurrence...56:2). The word *kādhībah* in this context is the verbal noun, like ‘*āfiyah* and ‘*aqibah*. The sense of the verse is that 'the news of the occurrence of this event cannot be a false news'. Some authorities have taken the word

kādhībah in the sense of *takdhīb* [to deny] and the meaning, in that case, is clear that 'no one can deny the fact that it will come to pass'.

خَافِضَةً رَّافِعَةً (It will be abasing [some], exalting [others]...56:3). The verse means that the 'Inevitable Event' referred to in the previous verse will bring about a great revolution in the lives of men, as is witnessed at the time of revolution of governments. The high and the mighty will be laid low and the despised and down-trodden will be exalted; the poor become rich and the rich become poor. This is how Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه interprets this statement. The purpose is to depict the horrors of the Day of Resurrection.

Three Categories of People on the Day of Resurrection

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً (and you will be [divided into] three categories...56:7). Ibn Kathīr says that people will be divided into three different categories on the Day of Resurrection. One group will be on the right side of Allah's Throne, and they are those who were brought forth from the right side of the loin of 'Ādam عليه السلام. These people will be given their Ledgers of Deeds in their right hands and will be taken to the right side of the Divine Throne. They are the inmates of Paradise.

The second category comprises those who will be placed to the left of Allah's Throne. These are people who were brought forth from the left side of the loin of 'Ādam عليه السلام. This category will be given their Ledgers of Deeds in their left hands and will be taken to the left side of the Divine Throne. They are the inhabitants of the Fire. [We seek refuge in Allah from their behaviour pattern!]

The third category consists of *As-sābiqūn* [the foremost] who are described as *Al-muqarrabūn* [the fortunate believers who are granted special nearness to Allah]. They will be placed in front of the Divine Throne. They include the Messengers, the Prophets, *Ṣiddiqīn*, martyrs and the friends of Allah. They are fewer than those on the right side. Towards the end of the Surah, the description of the three categories will be taken up again to mention that some signs start appearing, right from the time of death of a person, to indicate in which category he or she is going to fall.

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ (And the Foremost are the foremost....56:10) Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالى has recorded a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidah

‘Ā’ishah Ṣiddīqah رضي الله عنها that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the noble Companions: "Do you know who will be the first to be accommodated in the Divine Shade on the Day of Resurrection?" The noble Companions replied: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "They are those who accept the truth when it is presented to them; when they are asked for the rights due from them, they fulfill them; and they judge about the matters of others as they would judge about themselves."

Mujāhid says that *As-sābiqūn* (the Foremost) refers to 'the Prophets'. Ibn Sirin says that it refers to early Muslims who performed their prayers facing the two qiblas, namely, *baytul-maqdis* and *baitullah*. Ḥasan and Qatādah say that in every Ummah there will be *As-sābiqūn*. Some of the commentators express the view that they are people who go first to the mosque.

Ibn-Kathīr cites all these views and concludes that they are all correct and authentic in their own right. The opinions are not in conflict with one another, because *As-sābiqūn* are those who must have been foremost in their invincible faith and righteous deeds in this world, and as such they would be the 'Foremost' in the Hereafter in terms of reward which will befit their faith and good deeds.

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (...many from the earlier generations, and of a small number from the later ones....56:13-14) The word ثُلَّةٌ *thullatun*, means 'a party, group, company'. Zamakhsharī says that *thullatun* refers to 'a throng or a large number of people'.

Who are أَوَّلِينَ Awwalin (earlier generations) and آخِرِينَ Ākhirin (later ones)?

The words '*awwalīn*' (earlier generations) and '*ākhirīn*' (later ones) are used twice: First, in connection with *As-sābiqūn* (the Foremost) who are favoured with special Divine nearness; and secondly, in connection with *Ashab-ul-yamin* [the People of the Right, or the general body of believers]. In the case of the 'Foremost' it is mentioned that there will be 'many' from amongst the '*awwalīn*' (earlier generations) who will be categorized as 'the Foremost', but from amongst the later generations, the number of the 'Foremost' will be smaller. As opposed to this, in the description of the People of the Right, the word '*thullah*' (many) is

applied to both 'earlier' and 'later' generations in the following words: **ثَلَاثَةٌ** (many from the first generations, and many from the later ones...56:39-40)

The question now is: Who are 'earlier generations' and 'later generations'? In this connection, two views of the commentators have been recorded: The first view is that 'earlier generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of 'Ādam **عليه السلام** to the time just prior to the advent of the 'Holy Prophet **ﷺ**'. And 'later generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet to the Doomsday. This interpretation is recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim [with a chain of transmitters] from Mujāhid and Ḥasan Baṣrī. Ibn Jarīr has preferred this interpretation. This interpretation has also been adopted in the Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. This is supported by the Prophetic Tradition transmitted on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir **رضي الله عنه**. Ibn 'Asākir reports the Tradition [with his chain of transmitters] thus: "When the first pair of verses regarding 'the Foremost' was revealed stating that they will comprise 'many from the first generations, and of a small number from the later ones, **ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ** [56:13-14], Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb **رضي الله عنه** enquired: 'O Messenger of Allah, will there be a larger number of 'the Foremost' from among the earlier generations and a small number from amongst us?' For about a year, no revelation in this connection came down. A year later, verses [39] and [40] **ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ** "many from the first generations, and many from the later ones." were revealed. The Messenger of Allah **ﷺ** called Sayyidnā 'Umar **رضي الله عنه** and said to him:

إِسْمَعُ يَا عُمَرُ مَا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةً مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ الْإِنَّمَا مِنْ أَدَمَ إِلَىَّ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَأُمَمِي ثَلَاثَةٌ. (الحديث) - ابن كثير.

"O 'Umar, listen to what Allah has revealed many from the first generations, and many from the later ones). Behold! From 'Ādam to me is one *thullah* (throng) and my Ummah is another *thullah*' (throng)."

The theme of this Tradition is supported by the Tradition recorded by Imām Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Ḥātim **رحمهم الله تعالى** on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah **رضي الله عنه** that when verses [13] and [14] were revealed, the Companions **رضي الله عنهم** found this painful, because they understood them to mean that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous

than those of this Ummah. As a result, verses [39] and [40] were revealed and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated 'I hope that you will comprise a quarter of the inmates of Paradise, a third of the inmates of Paradise. Rather, you are a half of the inmates of Paradise, and will have a share in the other half.' (Ibn Kathīr) Thus, collectively, majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, a question arises about both these Traditions. The question is that verse 40 relates to the People of the Right, while verse 13 was about the Foremost. Then, how can verse 40 remove the concern of the Companions about verse 13?

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī resolves the problem thus: The noble Companions, in general, and Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ in particular, were saddened by the verse 13 presumably because they thought that the proportion of the later generations in the 'People of the Right' will be the same as it is in the Foremost, and thus the later generations will be small in number even among the 'People of the Right'. From this point of view, they thought their number in relation to all the inmates of Paradise, put together, will be very small. But when verses [39] and [40] were revealed, the point was clarified that collectively the majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ even though the collective number of later generations in the category of 'the Foremost' may be smaller as compared to the previous nations, especially since a large number of the previous nations will comprise the Prophets. In relation to them, it does not matter if the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are fewer.

However, Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān, Qurtubī, Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Mazharī and others prefer another interpretation: 'the earlier generations' and 'the later generations' imply, according to them, the earlier and the latter followers of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ own Ummah. 'Earlier generations', in their view, are the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their pupils, who are termed in a Ḥadīth as '*khair-ul-qurūn*' (the best generation), and 'later generations' include all those who came after them.

As for the Ḥadīth narrated by Jābir ؓ quoted above from Ibn Kathīr, in support of the first interpretation, Ibn Kathīr himself has expressed his reservation about its chain of transmitters. He writes "وَلَكِنْ فِي إِسْنَادِهِ نَقَرٌ" "In its chain of transmission, there is some defect." In support of his own interpretation, he quotes verses relating to Ummah of the Holy Prophet

ﷺ being the best of nations, as for instance كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ "You are the best of nations...". (3:110) Therefore, it is not possible that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous than those of this Ummah. Thus ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ 'many from the earlier generations' refers to the earlier generation of this Ummah and قَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ 'of a small number from the later generations' refers to the later generation of this Ummah from whom a small number will be included in the category of the 'Foremost'.

In support of this view, Ibn Kathīr has cited the statement of Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī, as recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, to the effect that he recited the Verse 10 about 'the Foremost' and said, 'They have predeceased, but O Allah! make us from amongst the People of the Right hand'. In another statement, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī is reported to have said in explanation of Verse 13: ثُلَّةٌ مِّمَّنْ مَّضَىٰ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ "Those foremost Faith are all from this Ummah". Likewise, Muḥammad Ibn Sirin said in connection with Verse 13 and 14: 'The scholars stated and hoped that they (the Foremost of earlier and later generations) will all be from amongst this Ummah.'

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī puts forward the following Prophetic Ḥadīth with a good chain of transmitters in support of the second interpretation:

أَخْرَجَ مُسَدَّدٌ فِي مُسْنَدِهِ وَأَبْنُ الْمُنْذِرِ وَالطَّبْرَانِيُّ وَأَبْنُ مَرْدَوَيْهِ بِسَنَدٍ حَسَنٍ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي قَوْلِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ قَالَ هُمَا جَمِيعًا مِّنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ.

"Musaddad in his Musnad, Ibn-ul-Mundhir, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Marduyah report with a good chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah ؓ that, while interpreting verses [39] and [40] (Many from the earlier generations and of a small number from the later ones), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'They are both from this Ummah.'"

Many Scholars of Ḥadīth report another Prophetic Tradition with a weak chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ also. The wordings are: هُمَا جَمِيعًا مِّنْ أُمَّتِي "They [the earlier and the later generations] are from my Ummah." From this point of view, verse [7] of this Chapter وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً "and you will be (divided into) three categories. [7]" addresses the Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and all three categories will be from this Ummah .

Mazharī has held the first interpretation as improbable, because according to the clear text of the Qur'ān, this Ummah is the best and most honoured of all nations. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the foremost believers from earlier nations should be more numerous than those of this Ummah. The higher rank of this Ummah visa-vis the other nations is proved by the express texts of the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic verse [3:110] reads: *كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ* "You are the best Ummah raised for the good of mankind...". Verse [3:110] reads: *لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا* "...so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you." Tirmidhī, Ibn Majah and Darimi have recorded a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Bahz Ibn Ḥakīm ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

أَنْتُمْ تَمُمُونَ سَبْعِينَ أُمَّةً أَنْتُمْ أَحَبُّهَا وَأَكْرَمُهَا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

"You are complement to the seventy nations of the days of yore.
You are the choicest one and the most honourable one in the sight of Allah."

Imām Bukhārī narrates a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "Will it please you if you are a quarter of the inmates of Paradise?" The Companions replied: "Yes, indeed, it would please us." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونُوا نِصْفَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ

"By Him in Whose control is my life! I hope that you will comprise a half of the inmates of Paradise." (Mazharī)

Tirmidhī, Ḥakīm and Baihaqī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةٌ وَعِشْرُونَ صَفًّا ثَمَانُونَ مِنْهَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ مِنْ سَائِرِ الْأُمَمِ

"The inmates of Paradise will be ranged in 120 ranks: eighty of them will be from this Ummah, and forty from the rest of the nations." (Tirmidhī has rated this tradition as *Ḥasan* and Ḥakīm as *ṣaḥīḥ*.)

The ratio between this Ummah and other communities in Paradise is given differently at different times, ranging between one third, one quarter, a half and two-thirds. There is no conflict in the ratios mentioned on different occasions. That was based on the estimation of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ which has been increasing at different times.

The reward of As-Sabiqun

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُونَةٍ ([They will be sitting] on thrones woven with gold...56:15)
The word مَوْضُونَةٍ *mawdunah*, according to Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, as recorded by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Baihaqi and others, means 'fabric woven or inwrought with gold thread'.

وَلَدَانِ مُخَلَّدُونَ (...by Immortal boys...56:17) meaning that the boys will never grow up, get old or change in shape. The preferred opinion is that the youths of Paradise, like the fair damsels of Paradise, will have been born in Paradise. They will be the servants of the inmates of Paradise. Ḥadīth narratives indicate that there will be thousands of such servants for each of the inmates of Paradise.

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقٍ وَكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَّعِينٍ (with bowls and jugs and a goblet of pure wine...56:18). The word *akwāb*, plural of *kūb*, refers to 'cups or glasses used for drinking. The word *abārīq*, plural of *ibārīq*, refers to 'jugs with sprouts'. The word *ka's* refers to 'a wine glass'. The word *ma'īn* refers to the fact that the glasses will contain wine drawn from a flowing spring.

لَا يَصْذَعُونَ عَنْهَا (from which they will neither suffer headache56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *sudā'* which means 'headache'. When worldly wine is taken in large quantity, it gives the drinker excruciating headache and makes him feel dizzy. The Heavenly wine is free from such harmful effects.

لَا يَنْزِفُونَ (...), nor will they be intoxicated...56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *nazf*, the root-meaning of which being 'the well became empty, all the water having been taken out of it.' Here it means 'the spring of his brain or mind or senses became exhausted.'

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (and the meat of birds that they desire....56:21]. It is recorded in a Prophetic Tradition that the inmates of Paradise will get meat of whatever birds they desire, as and when they desire it.

The Reward of Those on the Right

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ (As for the People of the right, How (lucky) are the People of the Right!...56:27). The People of the Right are initially the God-fearing and the righteous believers. Sinful believers will also join the People of the Right, some through the sheer grace of Allah, and others

will be forgiven through the intercession of a prophet or a friend of Allah. Some sinful believers will be punished for their sins, but after serving their punishment, they too will be purified and cleansed of the dross of their sins, after which they will join the People of the Right, because the fire of the Hell is not, in fact, a punishment; it is rather a way to cleanse him from the dross of his sins. (Mazhari)

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ (..amid lote-trees with no thorns - 58:28). The word *sidr* refers to 'lote-tree' and *makhḍūd* refers to 'a tree having its thorns removed'. It also means 'a tree having the branches bent because of abundance of its fruit'. Unlike the lote-trees of this world, the Heavenly lote-trees have a different description. Their fruits will be as large as the clay jugs, and their taste cannot be compared to those found in this world, (as described in a Ḥadīth).

طَلْحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ (and the trees of *tulh*, having layers one upon the other - 28:29). The word *ṭalḥ* refers to 'banana tree' and *mandūd* means 'clustered', fruits piled on top of each other as in a bunch of bananas.

ظِلِّ مَمْدُودٍ (and a shade, spread all over...56:30). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain, that in Paradise there is a tree so large that a rider may travel for a hundred years under its shade, but would not be able to pass it.

وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ (...and water, poured forth...56:31) This means the water will be flowing constantly on the surface of the ground.

وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (and a lot of fruits...56:32). The word *Kathīrah* [abounding] has two senses: [1] there will be plenty of fruits; and [2] there will be an uncountable variety and kinds of fruits.

لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (neither interrupted [in any season], nor prohibited ...56:33) The word *maqṭū'ah* means the fruits the supply of which is cut off at the end of the season. In this world most fruits are seasonal; some bear in summer, some in winter and others in rainy season. Once the season of the fruit is over, it ceases to be available. However, the supply of the fruits of Paradise never runs out in any season. Rather they will always be available for those who want to eat from them. Whenever these fruits are desired, they will be available and easy to grasp by Allah's power. The word *mamnū'ah* (prohibited) means that in this world there are

caretakers appointed to look after the gardens, who stop and prohibit people from picking the fruits, but in the gardens of Paradise there will be no such hindrance. The inmates will be able to pick them whenever they wish.

وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ (...and mattresses of high quality....56:34). The word *fūrūsh* is the plural of *firāsh* which means 'bed, couch, mattress'. The word *marfū'ah* lexically means 'upraised, elevated'. The couches could be upraised or elevated for one of several reasons: [1] because the place itself is high; [2] because the mattresses will not be on the ground, but on the thrones or beds; or [3] because the couches themselves will be thick (and of high quality). Some exegetes have taken the word '*fūrūsh*' in the sense of 'women', because it is one of the meaning of '*firāsh*' is referred as *firash*, as in the Prophetic Tradition *أَلَوْلَدٌ لِلْفِرَاشِ* 'The child belongs to the *firash*'. The word *firāsh* refers to 'wife'. This is corroborated by the characteristics of the women of Paradise described in the forthcoming verses. In this case, the word *marfū'ah* would mean 'high-ranking'.

إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً (Surely We have created those [females] a fresh creation...56:35) The word *insha'* means 'to create'. The pronoun *هُنَّ* *hunna* refers to the women of Paradise, although there is no mention of them in the immediately preceding verses. However, they have been mentioned in connection with 'the Foremost' in distantly foregoing verses [22-23]. If the word *firāsh* in the foregoing verse (34) refers to the women of Paradise, the antecedent of the pronoun is quite obvious. Likewise, the mention of beds, couches, thrones and other delightful items gives the pronoun the context to refer to women. The meaning of the verse is: 'We have created the Paradisiacal women in a special way, that is, the houris are created without being born biologically, and the women of this world who will enter the Paradise will also be reshaped in a way that the women who were ugly, dark-coloured or old in this world will be made beautiful, young and graceful.' It is recorded in Tirmidhī and Baihaqī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said in explanation of Verse 35 that the women who were old, blear eyed, with gray hair and ugly features in the world will be made beautiful and young in this new creation. Baihaqi also reports from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that an old lady asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pray to Allah that she may enter Paradise. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a humorous

way: لَا تَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ عَجُوزٌ "Old ladies will not enter Paradise." Hearing this the old lady got very sad, and according to some narrations, started weeping. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then explained that she would not be old when she would enter Paradise; she would be transformed into a young beautiful woman. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse 35. [Mazharī]

أَبْكَارًا (...virgins... - 56:36). The word *abkārān*, being the plural of *bikr*, means 'virgins'. The sense is the creation of the maidens of Paradise will be of such a nature that, even after every sexual intercourse, they will remain like virgins.

عُرُبًا (...amorous to their husbands,...56:37). The word '*urub*, is the plural of '*arūbah*. This refers to a woman who loves her husband passionately and is his beloved.

أَتْرَابٍ (...matching them in age...56:37) The word *atrāb* is the plural of *tirb*, meaning 'a person of equal age who played together with his mate in dust'. The verse means that men and women will be made of equal ages in Paradise. Some narrations report that they will be about thirty-three years old. [Mazharī]

ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ (many from the earlier generations, and many from the later ones....56:39-40) In connection with *sābiqūn*, (the Foremost) two views of the commentators were quoted earlier as to the identity of 'the earlier' and the 'later' generations. If 'the earlier' refers to the generations from 'Ādam عليه السلام to the period just prior to the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and 'the later generations' refers to the 'Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ till the Day of Judgment, as some of the commentators have opined, then the verses would mean: 'the People of the Right' will constitute a 'large party' of believers and the righteous from all the previous communities combined together, while there will be a 'large party' from the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. In this case, it is a great honor for the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, despite the short period they lived in this world, they could be compared to all the previous communities who were headed by hundreds of thousands of Prophets. Besides, the words 'many from the later generations' has the scope of being larger in number than the 'many from the earlier generations'.

If we go by the second view of the commentators, who say that both

'earlier' and 'later' generations are from the *ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then even the later generations of this *ummah* will not be totally deprived of 'the Foremost', though their number in later generations will be less. As for the People of the Right, their number will be large in both 'earlier' and 'later' generations. This fact is proved by a Ḥadīth reported by Bukhārī and Muslim from Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'A group of my 'Ummah will always remain on the truth and dominant, unharmed by those who fail to support them and those who defy them, until the Last Hour begins.'

Verses 57-74

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَّا تُمْنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ
تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾
لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ إِنَّا لَمَغْرُمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾
بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾
ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ
أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ
أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذَكُّرًا
وَمَتَاعًا لِلْمُقْوِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? [57] So, tell Me about the semen you drop (in the wombs): [58] Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? [59] We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated [60] from replacing you with others like you, and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know. [61] And you certainly know the first creation; then why do you

not take lesson? [62] Well, tell Me about that (seed) which you sow: [63] Is it you who grow it, or are We the One who grows? [64] If We so will, We can certainly make it crumbled, and you will remain wondering, [65] (and saying,) "We are laden with debt, [66] rather we are totally deprived." [67] Again, tell Me about the water you drink: [68] Is it you who have brought it down from the clouds, or are We the One who sends (it) down? [69] If We so will, We can make it bitter in taste. So why do you not offer gratitude? [70] Now tell Me about the fire you kindle: [71] Is it you who have originated its tree, or are We the Originator? [72] We have made it a reminder (of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell) and a benefit for travelers in deserts. [73] So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent. [74]

Proof of the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection

Thus far the Sūrah dealt with three categories of people on the Plain of Ḥashr (Gathering.) The verses so far described the reward and punishment of these three groups. The current set of verses warn the deviant skeptics and atheists who completely deny the Day of Judgement and life after death, or set up partners to Allah in His worship. The verses purport to tear down the curtain of negligence and ignorance that has kept man in the dark. Whatever exists, or is coming into existence at the present time, or will come into existence in the future in this cosmic world is as a result of the creative power of Allah. He brings them into existence, retains them and makes them subservient to man. The apparent causes of these events act as veils over Reality. Had these veils been removed and man is able to witness the creation of these things directly without the mediation of these apparent causes, he will be forced to believe in Allah. However, Allah has made this world a venue of test. Therefore, whatever comes into existence comes under the veils of causes.

Allah has, with His encompassing power and consummate wisdom, created a strong connection or relation between 'causes' and 'effects'. Wherever and whenever a secondary cause occurs, the effect necessarily follows. A casual observer assigns to every 'effect' a 'secondary or extrinsic cause', thus straying into the philosophy of 'causes' and 'effects'. Man does not seem to realize that the whole system of cause and effect ends with Allah. He is the First or Primary or Intrinsic Cause or Cause of all causes [*musabbib-ul-asbāb*]. It was explained earlier in Sūrah An-Najm that a

natural order of cause and effect pervades the entire universe. Every cause, which is not itself primary, is traceable to some other cause, and this to another and so on. But as the series of cause and effect in our finite world cannot be indefinite, it must terminate at some point. The Final Cause is, therefore, the Author of the universe. It is this Final Cause towards which the present verses call our attention.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ. أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَتَمَنُّونَ. ءَ أَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ، أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ (We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?...57-59). With verse 57 begins a series of arguments in support of Allah's Oneness and His power to raise the dead. The first argument in the current verse is taken from the very subtle and wonderful phenomenon of man's birth, starting with a drop of semen and developing into a full-fledged human being – the crown of all creation. Humans stop at thinking that male-female cohabitation in the process of their creation is the ultimate or real cause. Therefore, the Qur'ān poses the question to them in verse [58]: أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَتَمَنُّونَ. ءَ أَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ، أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ 'So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? In other words, a male plays a very insignificant biological role in the birth of a child in that he delivers a drop of microscopic semen in the womb of a female to combine with the microscopic ovum. Once this is done, it goes through several stages of growth and development without anyone, besides Allah, knowing what is happening. Eventually it forms into a foetus with a bone-structure. The skeleton is then clothed with flesh and skin. The soul is infused into it and the little universe [microcosm] comes into being with various systems: The nutritive and digestive system, the blood and the circulatory system, a system of human senses [sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste] and communication and the ability to think and understand. Man thus becomes a moving factory, and in none of these biological processes he has any say.

Neither of the parents [especially the mother in whose womb all this is taking place] knows whether the child is a boy or a girl, until it is born. The question is: Who creates the child in the womb of the mother, creation after creation, within three darknesses [ie the darkness of belly, the darkness of womb and the darkness of amniotic membrane]? Who made it beautiful, gave it the power of hearing and sight? Who bestowed on it the

faculty of thinking and comprehension? Only mentally blind person will fail to exclaim: "Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators!"

The forthcoming verses [60 and 61]

نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ
وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

"We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you, and creating you [afresh] in that [form] which you do not know....56:60-61]."

'Death' is the end of all physical life. This is the eternal law of Allah from which there is no escape. Allah pre-determines the time of human death. Man has no choice in the matter of death which frees the human soul from the fetters and shackles of its physical habitat. Allah has pre-designated a particular point in time up to which he could live. But one should not remain lulled into a fancy that he would continue to enjoy power and his free will. Allah has the power to eliminate him any time, and create another people in his place. This is the import of the words, "نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ" "We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you," The concluding part of verse [61] وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ "...and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know" implies that 'Allah has the power to reshape you in a form unknown to you at the moment.' It may happen either by one's turning into dust after death, or by his being metamorphosed into an animal shape as it happened in the past nations, some turned into monkeys and others into swine by way of punishment. It is also possible that they might be transformed into stones or minerals.

Creation of Plants, Sending down of Rain and Creation of Fire are Proof of Allah's Oneness

After referring to the birth of man from very insignificant beginning, the Sūrah, from verse [63] onwards, proceeds to give a brief account of things upon which man's life on earth depends. There are three principal things upon which man's life in this world depends - food, water and fire. The first thing is food to which verse [63] refers.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ (Well, tell Me about that [seed] which you sow:...56:63) In the matter of human creation, man was lost in the secondary or extrinsic causes and lost sight of his Real Creator and Master, the Primary or Intrinsic Cause of his creation. This unawareness was unveiled in a particular way. In a similar style, the reality of his source of nourishment is explicated. Allah poses the question to man: 'Indeed you till the land and plant the seeds but who causes them to sprout and grow - you or Allah?' When considered carefully, we will come up with the answer that the farmer or tiller has a very limited role to play. He ploughs the land and fertilizes the soil with manure, and thus softens it so that if the seed germinates, it will not be hampered by the hard ground. All of man's efforts move around this point. Once the plant sprouts, he takes care of it in that direction. But man is not the primary cause of the shoots pushing forth from the seed nor can he claim that he made the plant or tree. Therefore, we go back to the fundamental question: Who caused the seed lying under heaps and heaps of sand to germinate and come out to the surface of the earth so beautifully, comprising untold benefits? There can be only one answer to this question: The All-Encompassing Power and the Most Wonderful creation of the Master Creator of the universe.

Next to food, water is the most important thing upon which human life depends for its sustenance. Here too the Qur'ān, in its inimitable style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the water you drink? Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?' The answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Fire plays a most important part in the life of man. Much of his physical comfort depends upon it. [It is a thing of great utility. In this mechanistic age life is inconceivable without the use of fire. No industry, trade or travel is possible without it.] The Qur'ān again, in its unique and unparalleled style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the fire you kindle? Did you make its timber to grow, or did We make it?' Here too the answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Of course, in both instances the Qur'ānic answers are elaborate.

The last answer is summarized thus in verse [73] نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَمَتَاعًا (We have made it a reminder [of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell] and a benefit for travelers in deserts....56:73) The word *muqwīn* is derived from the infinitive *iqwā* and it comes from the root-word *qiwā'* which means 'waste, barren land, ruin or desert'. Thus the word *muqwī*

means 'a traveler or a wayfarer of a desert who alights to prepare his meals'. The verse purports to say that all these creations are the result of Allah's power and wisdom.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:74) The logical and rational conclusion of the above considerations should be for man to believe in the All-Encompassing Divine Power and in His Oneness, and declare the Purity of the Great Lord; for that is the way to express His gratitude.

Verses 75 - 96

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لِّوَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾
 إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ ﴿٧٨﴾ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا
 الْمُطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ
 أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِنُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنْكُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا
 إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْخُلُقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ
 إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ
 ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ
 ﴿٨٨﴾ فَرُوحٌ وَرِيحَانٌ ۖ وَجَنَّتٌ نَّعِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ
 أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَمَّا
 إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَنَزْلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٩٣﴾
 وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَاحِمٍ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ
 رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾

So, I swear by the setting places of the stars, [75] – and indeed it is a great oath, if you are to appreciate – [76] it is surely the Noble Qur'an, [77] (recorded already) in a protected book (i.e. the Preserved Tablet) [78] that is not touched except by the purified ones (the angels). [79] – a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. [80] Is it this

discourse that you take lightly, [81] and take your denial as your livelihood? [82] So why (do you) not (interfere) when the soul (of a dying person) reaches the throat, [83] and you are watching? [84] And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive. [85] So, if you are not going to be recompensed (in the Hereafter for your deeds), then why do you not [86] bring the soul back, if you are truthful? [87] So, in case he (the dying person) is from among those blessed with nearness, [88] then (for him) there is comfort and fragrance and garden of bliss. [89] And in case he is from among the People of the Right, [90] then, (it will be said to him,) "Peace is for you, being one of the People of the Right." [91] But if he is one of the deniers, the astray, [92] then (for him) there is entertainment from boiling water, [93] and burning in the Hell. [94] Indeed this is certainty in its true sense. [95] So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent. [96]

Sequencing of Arguments

Preceding verses put forward rational arguments, in support of life after death, by inviting attention to Allah's infinite power. The current verses are meant to prove this fact by giving an authoritative reference, that is, the Qur'an.

Allah swears to the Greatness of the Qur'an

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ (So, I swear by the setting places of the stars...56:75)
The words لَا أَقْسِمُ 'I swear' are prefixed in the text by the particle لَا *lā* [no] which is not translated in the text, because it is idiomatically prefixed to 'oath', as for example لَا وَاللَّهِ *lā wallāh* [No, by Allah]. In pre-Islamic Arabic, we come across the idiomatic oath لَا وَابْنِكَ *lā wa-abīk* [No, by your father]. Some lexicologists say that the particle *lā* is added only as an idiomatic expression [*zā'idah*] which carries no sense, and others say that when the refutation of an addressee's hypothesis is intended, لَا *lā* is used to signify that the assumption of the addressee is not correct, but the right thing is that which follows.

The word مَوَاقِعِ *mawāqī'* is the plural of مَوْقِعٍ *mawq'* and refers to the points where or times when the stars set. Here, like in Sūrah An-Najm وَالنُّجُومُ إِذَا هَوَتْ "By the star when it goes down to set, [1]", the oath of stars is qualified by their setting-time. The wisdom underlying this is that when the stars set, their function seems to have been cut off from the horizon,

and we witness effects of their vanishing. This is the proof of their perishability and dependence on Divine power.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ. لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (It is surely the Noble Qur'an (recorded already) in a protected book [i.e. the Preserved Tablet] that is not touched except by the purified ones [the angels]....77-79) Verses [75-76] constituted oath and the current set of verses is the subject of the oath [jawāb-ul-qasam]. The Qur'an is a noble and glorious Book. The verse refutes the assumption of the pagans that this Book has been forged by a human being or that [God forbid!] it is a speech inspired by the devil.

The phrase كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ 'a protected book' refers to *lawḥ mahfūz* [i.e. the Preserved Tablet]. لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (that is not touched except by the purified ones ...56:79). Two issues require clarification here. The commentators have different views about them, because the structure of verse 78 and 79 has two possibilities grammatically: The first possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is the qualification of the Preserved Tablet referred to in the previous verse. In this case, 'the purified ones' can refer only to angels, and the phrase 'not touched' cannot be taken in its literal sense of physical touch; it would rather mean 'being aware of'. The sense of the verse would be that no one is aware of the Preserved Tablet and its contents except the purified angels. (Qurṭubī) This interpretation is adopted in Bayān-ul-Qur'an as well. The second possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is taken as a qualification of the Qur'an referred to in the previous verse. In this case the word Qur'an would refer to the scrolls or scripts in which it is written, and 'not touched', will remain in its literal sense of referring to physical touch by hand etc. The sense would be that the Script of the Qur'an is not touched by anyone except by the purified angels who bring revelation to the Prophet ﷺ. Since this interpretation does not need to take the word 'touch' in its figurative sense, Qurṭubī and some other commentators have preferred this interpretation. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى says, 'The best interpretation of verse [77 and 78] I have ever heard is what is mentioned in Sūrah 'Abas (80) verses [13-16]: فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كَرَامٍ بَرَّةٍ (It is [recorded] in those scripts [of the Preserved Tablet] that are honoured, exalted, purified, in the hands of those scribes who are honourable, righteous.)

The second issue that requires consideration in this verse is what is meant by the phrase 'the purified ones'. A large group of the Companions, their followers and leading authorities on Qur'ānic commentary think that the referent of 'the pure ones' are the angels who are purified of the dross and adulteration of sins, and who are innocent. This is the view of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه and of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also adopted this view.

Some of the commentators think that Qur'ān refers to the copy of the Holy Book that is in our hands, and the referent of the word '*muṭahharūn*' ('purified ones') are people free from minor impurity and major impurity. Minor impurity means to be without *wuḍū'* and minor impurity can be cleansed by making *wuḍū'* or *tayammum* [cleaning with dust]. Major impurity refers to the state of impurity which is caused by sexual intercourse, lustful discharge of semen during sleep, and menstrual and postpartum discharges. *Ghusl* (having bath) is the only means of achieving purity from this state. This interpretation is placed on the text by 'Aṭā', Ṭā'ūs, Sālim and Muḥammad Bāqir رحمهم الله تعالى. In this case, although verse "that is not touched except by the purified ones...56:79) is a declarative sentence, it is in fact used in the sense of prohibiting human beings to touch the Qur'ān without being free from the minor and major impurities: The person who wishes to touch the Qur'ān needs to be purified of the visible as well as the invisible impurities by taking *wuḍū'*, *tayammum* or *ghusl*, as required. Qurtubī and Maḥzarī prefer this interpretation.

In the incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar's رضي الله عنه embracing Islam, we come across the part of the story where he asked his sister to give him the pages of the Qur'ān, she recited verse [79] of this Sūrah, refused to give him the pages and said 'only the pure ones can touch it'. As a result, he was forced to take a bath, and then recite the contents of the pages. This incident also lends support to the last interpretation. The versions of the Tradition that prohibit the impure people from touching the Qur'ān are put forward by some authorities to argue in favour of the last interpretation.

However, since Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Anas رضي الله عنه and others have a different view about the interpretation of this verse, as mentioned above, many scholars did not base the prohibition of touching the Qur'ān without ablution on verse [79]. Rather, the prohibition is established by

the following Traditions:

Imām Mālik cites, as evidence, the Holy Prophet's letter in his Muwatta' which he wrote to 'Amr Ibn Hazm. It contains the following statement: لَا يَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ "Only a clean one may touch the Qur'an". Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī gives the following references: Musnad of 'Abdurrazzāq, Ibn Abī Dāwūd and Ibn-ul-Mundhīr, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardūyah record a Tradition on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: لَا يَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ (Only a clean one may touch the Qur'an.)

Some Rulings about touching the Holy Qur'an

(1) On the basis of the foregoing Prophetic Aḥādīth, the overwhelming majority of the 'Ummah and the four major schools concur that 'purity' is a condition for the permissibility of touching the Holy Qur'an and it is not allowed to touch it in a state of impurity. It means that before touching the Holy Qur'an, one must make sure that no *najāsah* (i.e. things declared by Sharī'ah as filth) is attached to one's hand, and that he or she is in the state of *wuḍū'* and is not in the state of *Janābah* (the state in which it is obligatory to take bath.) The divergence of interpretation referred to earlier is only in connection with whether or not verse [79] can be the basis of such a prohibition. Some jurists think that the verse as well as the relevant Traditions bear the same sense, hence they use them as supportive of each other in evidence of their ruling. Others, on account of divergence of interpretation among the Companions, exercised precaution in using the Qur'ānic text as evidence in support of their ruling. But because of the Traditions, they ruled that touching the Qur'an without ablutions is impermissible. In sum, there are no differences in their rulings. The differences are only in supportive evidence of these rulings.

(2) If the Qur'an is in a cover which is sewn or permanently attached to it in some way, it is not permitted - according to the four major schools - for an unclean person to touch it without ablutions. If however the Qur'an is covered in something that is not permanently attached to it, an unclean person may, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, touch it without ablutions. However, according to Imāms Mālik and Shāfi'ī, an unclean person is not permitted to touch it before taking ablutions. [Maḥzarī]

(3) If a person is wearing a garment, it is not lawful for him to touch the Qur'ān with his sleeves or skirt if he is unclean. However, he may touch it with a handkerchief or a sheet. [Maḏharī]

(4) Scholars have ruled it which is proved by this very verse with grater force that a person in the state of *janābah* (sexual defilement) and a woman in the state of menstruation or postpartum bleeding cannot recite it, even from memory until bath has been taken, because if it is obligatory to honour the written letters of the Holy Qur'ān by touching them only in the state of purity, its spoken words deserve the same honour with greater importance. The requirement of this honour should have been that even in the state of minor impurity a person should not be allowed to recite the Holy Qur'ān. But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī عليه السلام report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the Qur'ān without *wuḍū'*. On this basis, the jurists have ruled that it is permissible to recite it without *wuḍū'*. (But in the case of major impurity the rule will remain intact.). [Maḏharī]

أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنْتُمْ مُذْهِبُونَ (Is it this discourse that you take lightly,...56:81)
The word مُذْهِبُونَ *mudhinun* is the plural of *mudhin*, being the active participle from إِذْهَانَ *idhan*, which literally means 'to apply or rub oil on the body'. When oil is applied or rubbed on the body, the muscles are relaxed, and parts of the body become soft and supple. By extension, the word is employed in the sense of showing flexibility and softness on inappropriate occasions. Hence, it is used in the sense of hypocrisy. In the current verse the word is used in the sense of hypocrisy and rejection of Allah's verses carelessly.

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(So why [do you] not [interfere] when the soul [of a dying person] reaches the throat, and you are watching? And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive. So, if you are not going to be recompensed [in the Hereafter for your deeds], then why do you not bring the soul back, if you are truthful?...56:83-87)

The preceding verses proved two facts through rational arguments and by swearing an oath by the falling stars: [1] that the Holy Qur'ān is

the word of Allah. Neither Jinn nor devil can ever tamper with it. Everything it contains is the truth; and [2] one of the most fundamental articles of faith enshrined in the Qur'ān is the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning. Towards the end of the passage, it is mentioned that the infidels and idolaters, in spite of clear arguments and evidence, reject life after death.

Their denial of Resurrection by the unbelievers, in a way, amounts to a claim that their lives and souls are under their own control, and they have a say in the matter of life and death. In order to refute this assumption, the above verses give the example of a dying person. When the soul reaches his throat, all of his near and dear ones look at him and express their desire that he may live longer, but none of them is able to intervene and save his life. All the people around him seem absolutely helpless. However, Allah is nearer to the dying person than the people around him even though they are unable to see Him. In other words, that is, He is nearer to him in terms of knowledge and power. He is fully aware of the person's inner and outer conditions and has complete control over him.

In short, it is not within people's power to get together and save a soul or life. Allah is nearer to a dying person than his soul or life. Allah has pre-designated a particular time for the soul to be separated from the body. None can avert it. In view of this graphic picture, the disbelievers are reminded that if they think that they cannot be resurrected after death, and they are too strong to come under Allah's grasp, then they must restore the soul when it has reached the throat and is about to depart from the body or it has already departed and died. If it is not possible to do any of these, how illogical or irrational it is for man to think that he can escape the Divine grasp and reject life after death!

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (So, in case he [the dying person] is from among those blessed with nearness...56:88). In the foregoing verses, it was made clear that one day the present world will come to an end. It was also testified that at the time of death the near and dear ones, friends and relatives, and doctors all stand helplessly around the dying person. Likewise, resurrection, reckoning, and reward and punishment, after account of deeds, are all a reality and certainty of the highest degree. At the commencement of the Sūrah, it was mentioned that there will be

three categories of the people in regard to their reward or punishment. The gist of this subject is again summarized here. If the dying person is among the Foremost believers, he will experience comfort, fragrance of happiness and a Garden of bliss. If he is not from the Foremost, but from the People of the Right hand, i.e. from the general body of believers, he will also experience the bounties and pleasures of Paradise. But if he is one of the People of the Left hand, the deniers and the deviant ones, then he will be in the blazing fire of Hell where he will be served with boiling water to drink.

At the end of this subject the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (Indeed this is certainty in its true sense...56:95). None of the reward or punishment mentioned in the preceding verses is refutable because they are a dead certainty that has no room for any doubt or suspicion.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:96). The Sūrah concludes with an imperative addressed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pronounce the *tasbiḥ* of His Lord. This includes all kinds of *tasbiḥāt* (rememberances)- within *ṣalāh* and outside *ṣalāh*. *Ṣalāh* itself is sometimes referred to as *tasbiḥ*. Thus this verse enjoins to keep up the regular performance of *ṣalāh*.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah
Ends here.